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Executive Registry

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16 April 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology
Deputy Director for Intelligence
Deputy Director for Operations
Deputy Director for Administration
Deputy to the DCI for the Intelligence Community
Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence Officers
General Counsel
Inspector General
Legislative Counsel
Comptroller
Administrative Officer, O/DCI

SUBJECT : "No surprises"

1. It was a great shock for me to be informed by a previous Director that he had recently learned of certain activities of this Agency prior to his Directorship but which continued during it. The shock was compounded by the statement that the decision not to inform him had been a conscious one.

2. Such a situation is totally intolerable. It casts the gravest doubts on the integrity of the Agency, its discipline and the possibility of maintaining this important service to our country.

3. I cannot believe that such a situation exists at this time, nor that it would be countenanced by any of my colleagues in the Agency today. Further, I believe our mechanisms today are such as to eliminate any such possibility. The full authority of the Inspector General to investigate any matter in the Agency, the yearly reminder to all employees of their duty to raise with me or the Inspector General any matters which in their opinion might be questionable, the functioning of the Management Advisory Group at the Agency and the Directorate levels, the intensive effort made by all of us to keep direct contact with the working levels of the Agency, the interchange which exists in the Management Committee, the exchange of experiences

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through the Midcareer, Senior Seminar and similar courses, and the confidence I have in the integrity and discipline in the command structure here, all convince me that such an event is not possible today.

4. To reinforce the above, however, and to make our policies on this completely clear, I am establishing as Agency doctrine the management style of "no surprises." I have undertaken the commitment that the authorized supervisory bodies over me have "no surprises" with respect to CIA's activities. These include the National Security Council, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and the appropriate oversight committees of the Congress. In order to implement this commitment, I insist on a corresponding policy within the Agency, i. e., that it is the obligation of my subordinates and, below them, their subordinates, to raise with me every matter of which I should be informed so that I have "no surprises" if something comes to my attention independently. This policy can be conducted within the limits of classification and compartmentation necessary to our sensitive material. It can also be conducted by describing matters in summary rather than in detail when the detail is not essential or would be impossible to absorb in raw form.

5. As indicated above, I believe that there are "no surprises" to me existing in the Agency at this time. I do request each of you, however, to review this matter and to reassure me that this is in fact the case or bring to my attention any matters which may have been left out inadvertently due to the press of time and other business. I would expect to hear from each of you orally or in writing by 1 May 1975.


W. E. Colby
Director

cc: DDCI

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